

COUNTY CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of the
Virginia Association of Counties

September 24, 2019



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COUNTY STRONG 85 YEARS

Advocacy · Engagement · Action

2019 VACo Annual Conference



November 10-12

The Omni Homestead
Bath County, Virginia

[Annual Conference Registration Form](#)
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Keynote Speakers confirmed for the 2019 VACo Annual Conference

Monday, November 11
Opening General Session
830am

The Honorable **Ralph Northam**, Governor,
Commonwealth of Virginia



Dr. George H. Gilliam,
Lecturer, Corcoran
Department of History,
University of Virginia
- Will speak about 400
years of the Virginia State
Legislature.



Tuesday, November 12
Closing General Session
1030am

The Honorable **Tom Davis**, Attorney
and Former Representative, U.S.
House of Representatives



The Honorable **Jim Moran**,
Professor of Practice, School
of Public and International
Affairs, Virginia Tech and Former
Representative, U.S. House of
Representatives

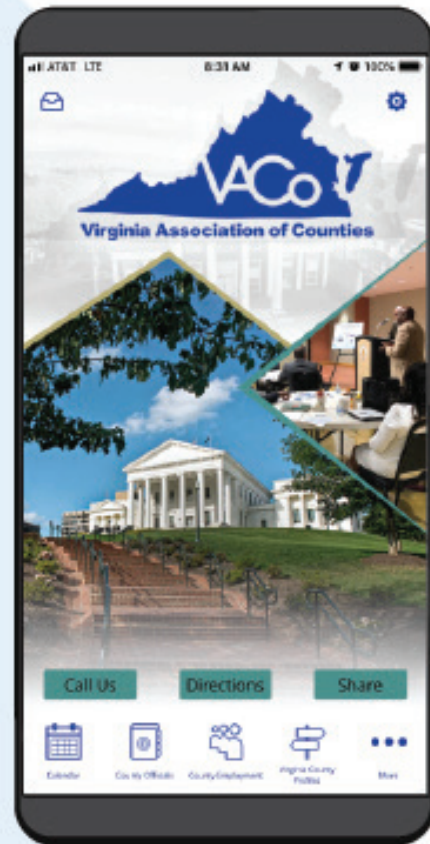


Mark J. Rozell, Founding Dean,
Schar School of Policy and
Government, George Mason
University



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our new app



The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) mobile application is a valuable tool for County officials and staff to better serve their communities. With the VACo mobile app, users can easily stay informed about issues important to Counties with many features, including:

- * VACo Events Registration and Info
- * VACo Member Directory
- * Legislative News and Alerts | Capitol Contact
- * VACo Chat
- * County Pulse Podcast
- * Employment Opportunities

Downloading the app is easy...

- Scan the QR Code or search "Virginia Assn of Counties" from the iTunes or Google Play Store
- Opt-in for VACo Push Notifications to receive important VACo alerts
- For access to the most features, request an account with your email and a password
- Once your account is approved, members will have access to all the features.

Caution is the Watchword at Money Committee Briefings



The House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees met last week to receive updates on August revenue collections as well as briefings on the progress of Medicaid expansion, efforts to address overcrowding at state mental health hospitals, and concerns about potential threats to lottery revenues, among other issues. Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne suggested that, while the state’s economy continues to grow, spending pressures in major programs appear to be outpacing growth in the state’s major revenue sources, creating a “math problem” to be reckoned with in the next legislative session. Growth in income and sales taxes, which generate approximately 80 percent of state General Fund revenues, has been trending at about 3.5 percent per year, while education and health care costs, which comprise 74 percent of General Fund expenditures, have been growing at rates between 5 and 7 percent.

Total General Fund collections increased by 0.3 percent in August (which may reflect the month being short one deposit day relative to last August). On a fiscal year-to-date basis, total revenues have grown by 7.3 percent, ahead of the forecast of 1.2 percent growth. Withholding collections fell by 3.2 percent in August, but on a year-to-date basis have grown by 7 percent, remaining ahead of the forecast of 4.2 percent growth. Sales and use tax collections turned in a strong performance, with an increase of 12.9 percent in August (reflecting July sales). Secretary Layne pointed out that a major factor in this growth was the registration of online sellers to collect and remit use taxes in accordance with statutory changes implemented this session; the growth in collections from online sellers offset weakness in sales from traditional brick-and-mortar retailers. Secretary Layne noted that recordation tax collections increased by 15.2 percent in August and have grown by 21.7 percent on a year-to-date basis, ahead of the forecast of a 4.6 percent decrease; he suggested that this growth reflects a spike in refinancing of mortgages by homeowners taking advantage of continued low interest rates.

Collections in September, which will include estimated payments for nonwithholding income taxes and sales tax collections for August sales, will provide a clearer picture of the performance of the state’s major revenue sources as the formal fall revenue forecasting process begins. Secretary Layne noted several national headwinds affecting the state economy, including uncertainty about financial shocks stemming from geopolitical conflict, such as trade tensions, and concern about the federal government’s ability to assist states in the event of an economic slowdown, given high levels of federal debt.

Several other factors that complicate Virginia’s budget planning were discussed at the Committees’ hearings. Virginia is currently in negotiations with the federal government over the provisions of its proposed Medicaid § 1115 demonstration waiver, which, as envisioned in the 2018 Appropriations Act, would include support services to assist able-bodied adults who would be newly-eligible for Medicaid coverage in securing employment. Although the Administration continues to push for federal approval of this element of Virginia’s waiver application, there is a possibility that Virginia will have to fund these services out of state resources. (Director of the Department of Medical Assistance Services Karen Kimsey’s presentation is available at [this link](#).) In addition, Kevin Hall, Executive Director of the Virginia Lottery, [presented](#) to both Committees about the proliferation of unregulated “games of skill” and the potential for losses of an estimated \$139 million in lottery sales in FY 2020, and a potential loss of \$39 million in lottery profits. Acting Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Mira Signer [outlined](#) a plan to add temporary beds at Catawba Hospital to relieve census pressures on the state mental health hospital system, which has struggled with overcrowding in recent years. As of last week, the state hospitals were operating at 101 percent capacity.

Secretary Layne’s presentation may be found at [this link](#).

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR
**GROWTH &
OPPORTUNITY**
IN EACH REGION

GO Virginia Expands Grant Eligibility to Include Middle Mile Broadband Projects

The GO Virginia [Board](#) met on Tuesday, September 10, for its first meeting of 2019 to approve \$780,000 in competitive economic development grants to support five regional initiatives, re-elect a new chairman, and approve the use of Go Virginia funding for certain investments in Broadband, among other items. The 24-member policy Board provides oversight to the nine regional councils and manages state incentives to match with local, federal, and private funds to encourage regional economic cooperation and development.

The five proposals approved by the Board were:

- Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst, which involved Virginia Tech and the Counties of Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke and the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, plus the City of Roanoke to develop and implement a program that will encourage development of the blockchain field with a focus on training the necessary professional workforce for this field.
- Developing a Destination for Talent, which involved Virginia Tech and the Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, and Roanoke, the Cities of Covington, Salem, and Radford, and the Town of Vinton to create a pipeline of talent from the University to employers in the region's priority industry clusters.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Investment Strategy, which involved all of Region 3, Mid-Atlantic Broadband and Longwood University to develop and map the entrepreneurial ecosystem for the region.
- Project Oasis, which involved Wise County and the City of Norton to partner with the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to evaluate sites in the region suitable to attract data centers and explore the development of tools to utilize mine-pool water reclamation for the that purpose.
- The GIG (Gather + Innovate + Grow), which involved Accomack and Northampton Counties and the Town of Exmore to partner with the Eastern Shore Foundation to provide broadband-connected working spaces and startup business support services.

The complete list can be found [here](#).

The Board also re-elected Tom Farrell as chairman of the GO Virginia board of directors. Mr. Farrell is also CEO of Dominion Energy and replaces John "Dubby" Wynne of Virginia Beach.

Lastly, the Board received a report from Vice-Chairman Ben Davenport, who leads the Board's Broadband Taskforce. The Board was tasked by the General Assembly in the 2019 session to investigate how Go Virginia could best provide guidance and support to the goals of expanding access to and utilization of broadband. To that end, the Board voted to allow use of Go Virginia grant funds for projects supporting regional broadband planning efforts focused on private sector service provisions as localities prepare to use taxpayer dollars to incentivize private sector buildout. Such proposals would require a 50% local match. Additionally, Go Virginia funds may now be used for middle-mile broadband infrastructure projects. Go Virginia funds may not be used for broadband projects focused on providing direct or retail broadband (last mile) service to customers.

Since its inception, GO Virginia has approved \$20.8 million in grants for 60 projects across the Commonwealth. These projects are expected to create more than 10,000 jobs.

VACo Contact: [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)



Visit Craig County and the Painted Barn Quilts

These lively quilt “signs” have appeared in many rural communities across the country. Now they are in Craig County in an effort to raise money for the library. The Craig County Library is growing and providing all kinds of good services to the community. Please help us support it!

Barn quilts are painted quilt squares on weatherproof boards that are attached to barns, outbuildings, fences, store fronts, homes, or hung indoors. A single square of a quilt pattern is enlarged to 4’ x 4’ or 8’ x 8’, or 2’ x 2’ for smaller indoor and outdoor spaces.

Maps and other information can be found at www.barnquiltsforbooks.com. There are over 50 barn quilts that can be seen from the roads in Craig County. Since 2014, over 145 barn quilts have been painted. About half of them are in eight states and more than 10 Counties in Virginia.

SOURCE: [Barn Quilts for Books](http://www.barnquiltsforbooks.com)





Mark Your Calendars



COUNTY STRONG 85 YEARS

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2019 VACo Annual Conference



COUNTIES COMING TOGETHER

November 10-12 | The Omni Homestead | Bath County

As VACo's biggest event of the year, the Annual Conference is a must for every Virginia County Supervisor and county staff member. Drawing in hundreds of officials, dozens of speakers, and a host of vendors and exhibits, VACo's Annual Conference provides opportunities to learn from others, grow in knowledge, and improve skills.

The conference includes:

- Opportunities to shape VACo's Legislative Program
- General Sessions featuring speakers on issues that affect counties
- Breakout Sessions designed to educate and promote collaboration
- Exhibit Hall with vendors that serve Virginia Counties' interests
- The Annual Business Meeting when VACo's Legislative Program is adopted and the VACo Board of Directors is elected
- Steering Committee Meetings
- Regional Meetings
- Specialized Group Meetings
- Multiple networking opportunities with local government peers and state legislators

[Annual Conference Registration Form](#) | [Online Conference Registration](#) | [Preliminary Agenda](#)

[VACo Lodging Policy](#) | [List of Alternative Lodging Options](#)

Virginia Board of Education Debates Penultimate Biennial Revisions to the Standards of Quality Revisions and releases Rebenchmarking Estimates

On September 18-19, the Virginia Board of Education ([VBOE](#)) met to continue its discussion of priorities and goals for revisions to the Standards of Quality ([SOQs](#)), which set minimum requirements that must be met by all local school divisions for K-12 education in Virginia. This was the penultimate meeting of the Board before it takes final action in October and either recommend or prescribe the revised SOQs to the Governor and General Assembly. The latest set of [proposals](#) contain significant changes that include increased local flexibility, but still could impose significant fiscal impacts both to state and local governments if enacted.

As previously [reported](#), VBOE reviews the SOQs every two years and typically submits its recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly in September or October as mandated by Article VIII, Section 2 of the Constitution of Virginia. The SOQs have wide ranging fiscal impacts to localities as they determine a variety of factors, including school staffing ratios, distribution of state aid, and other requirements for public education. VACo staff and/or members of the VACo Education Steering Committee participated in all four regional meetings held by the Board in May, as well as submitting formal comments on the process in June, and attending regular meetings of VBOE. Throughout this process, VACo has stressed the importance of maintaining and creating local flexibility as well as restoration of state funding to pre-Recession era levels of support.

As part of VBOE's [Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023](#), a large focus of the proposals under consideration is devoted to promoting equitable learning environments and supporting teachers in a manner that leads to higher rates of recruitment and retention. Many of the proposals are continuations of VBOE's 2016 recommendations, including the elimination of the "support position cap," which if enacted, would provide approximately \$370 million in additional state funding to localities for existing support staff positions that are currently completely funded by local efforts. However, some of the new proposals would require additional expenditures by both state and local government.

VBOE's most recently revised proposal creates an Equity Fund, which among other functions moves the At-Risk Add-On program into the SOQs. At-Risk Add-On funds provide local school divisions with additional state support for student instruction based on concentrations of student poverty. This is currently a voluntary program that school divisions can opt into and contains required local effort (RLE). The proposal increases state funding by \$131 million and allows flexible spending of these funds for existing academic remediation and support services as well as for compensation of teaching positions. The proposed standard would still require additional compensation for the deployment of experienced, proficient teachers to classrooms in schools with high concentrations of poverty. This new fund would likely require a local contribution of \$79.5 million.

Another proposal would also move the K-3 Class Size Reduction program into the SOQs and allow larger class sizes for experienced teachers who are provided compensation adjustments. Current SOQs mandate the maximum pupil to instructor ratio at 24:1. The Reduction program lowers this ratio based on the three-year average percent of free lunch eligible students per school and provides additional state support to do so. The program is currently voluntary, though according to FY 2018 data, all but 5.3% of funds were expanded, indicating that most, but not all school divisions participate in the program. The proposed changes would make participation by all school divisions mandatory and allow for compensation adjustments to experienced teachers. Local fiscal impact would be felt in non-participating divisions.

Another new proposal would establish a Teacher Leader program, which would expand existing state funding of the Teacher Mentor program from approximately \$1 million to \$100 million and require additional compensation for teachers providing mentorship. The new program would require school boards to staff teacher leadership and mentorship programs at a ratio of one mentor position per 15 first and/or second year teachers, and one position for every 50 teachers with three or more years of experience. In addition to the staffing ratios, the proposal would also require release time from other duties for teachers to receive mentoring. This time would need to be covered by substitutes or other instructional personnel. The estimated local contribution required for this proposed standard would be \$84.3 million.

Additional new proposals include: a) changing staffing requirements for English Learner teachers to differentiate based upon the proficiency level of students in school divisions as opposed to the existing ratio, which is based on total numbers of English Learner students, b) removing school nurse, school social worker, and school psychologist positions from the SOQ support position category creating local flexibility for how these positions are filled while also guaranteeing state funding support, c) shifting the Early Reading Intervention Program into the SOQs and basing reading specialist staff ratio/deployment on the number of students failing the third grade Reading assessment, and d) creating state and regional Work-Based Learning Coordinators to help fulfill the goals of the [Profile of a Virginia Graduate](#) to foster connections between school divisions and the business community to advance work-based learning opportunities.

Funding of SOQ requirements is met by a combination of state and local resources. Local ability to pay for standards with

EDUCATION continued from Page 7

required local effort (RLE) is determined by the [composite index formula](#), which is updated every two years to account for the latest available state and local values in real property, adjusted gross income, retail sales, average daily membership of students, and total population.

All the new proposals under consideration by VBOE in their current form would involve a combination of state funding and RLE. Some localities may already have committed to funding some of the proposed requirements, and as such, would be eligible to receive new additional state funding support should they be enacted. However, this may not be the case for all of the proposals and for all localities. A chart detailing the estimated state and local fiscal impact of the proposals can be viewed below:

Proposal	State Fiscal Impact	Local Contribution
Consolidated At-Risk Add-On	\$131.9 million*	\$ 79.5 million
K-3 Class Size Reduction	None	No additional contribution (except in nonparticipating divisions)
Teacher Leader and Teacher Mentor Programs	\$102.1 million*	\$84.3 million
English Learner Teachers	\$26.7 million	\$32.8 million
Specialized Student Support Personnel	approx. \$100 million	approx. \$81.8 million
School Counselors	\$88.2 million	\$72.2 million
Elementary School Principals	\$7.9 million	\$6.4 million
Assistant Principals	\$83.9 million	\$68.6 million
Recession-Era Savings and Flexibility Strategies	\$371.6 million	\$304.0 million
Reading Specialists	\$36.6 million*	\$29.1 million
Work-Based Learning Coordinators	\$1.1 million	None
Principal Mentor Programs	\$1.1 million	None

* denotes fiscal impact shown does not include existing appropriations to existing programs that would be shifted into the Standards of Quality.

VBOE continues to consider whether to recommend the SOQ revisions to the Governor and General Assembly or to issue them as prescriptions. VBOE President Dan Gecker indicated during the meeting that they have reached out to the Attorney General’s office for additional clarification as to the constitutional options available to VBOE in this regard. If they chose to issue the latter, the General Assembly would potentially either adopt the revised SOQs as prescribed or to make alterations in the biennial budget. VBOE meets next on October 17, at which point they hope to have this information and take a final vote on the proposed revisions of the SOQ. If you are interested in submitting public comment to VBOE, information on how to do so may be found [here](#).

In other VBOE related news, VBOE received a [report](#) detailing Rebenchmarking of the Direct Aid to Public Education Budget for the 2020-2022 Biennium. The rebenchmarked budget represents the state cost of continuing the current Direct Aid programs into the next biennium, with updates to the input data used in the funding formulas that determine the cost of the programs. This technical process occurs every two years and incorporates the latest data to reflect changes in enrollment, salaries, support costs, inflation, and other factors. This process impacts localities as it helps determine RLE. The initial estimated state cost of rebenchmarking for the upcoming biennium was stated to be \$595.7 million.

Full meeting materials and minutes of VBOE and the VBOE Committee on the Standards of Quality can be found [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

VACo Contact: [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)

Rural Caucus Blog: The Broadband Puzzle

Throughout rural Virginia, communities face a variety of opportunities and formidable challenges, with many of those issues varying upon the region of the Commonwealth. I've often been fascinated by the changing conversations – transportation and I-81 in Southwest Virginia and Chesapeake Bay TMDL in areas east of I-95.

Yet, there is one issue that has continually driven the discussion in every region I've visited; one puzzle that remains at least partially unsolved in both the mountains and on the coast.

Broadband.

Though the subject of countless summits, seminars, and whitepapers, the goal of affordable high-speed broadband access in every community continues to be elusive. However, even as it may seem that progress has stagnated, a glance around the Commonwealth can renew hope for a connected future. Counties are thinking outside the box, working hard to increase access to broadband in ways that best fit the needs and strengths of their individual communities.

Let's examine one such locality: Orange County, Virginia. I first learned of Orange County's big plans for broadband when Lewis Foster, Broadband Program Manager, discussed their blueprint at one of our Regional Meetings back in June. Later, Lewis was kind enough to share with me the vision for Orange County's broadband future. Below is our conversation.

Angela: Lewis, tell me about broadband access in Orange County.

Orange County is predominately rural with limited broadband availability. Right now, private sector broadband companies can't provide affordable, high-speed broadband service in rural areas because they have no profit guarantee. Providing internet service requires large upfront capital expenses, but rural areas have a relatively small potential customer base so internet companies may not recoup their initial investment.

So, it's not surprising that, according to our surveys, only 12% of Orange County citizens with internet speeds of greater than 25 megabits per second are satisfied with their service, while 25% say they do not have any internet at all.

A: What are your goals for broadband access in Orange County?

Our overarching goal is to bring affordable broadband service to our rural community one connection at a time, while enhancing quality of life and fostering economic development.

We also want to reduce capital costs and start-up operating expenses for private sector providers to ensure that our unserved and underserved citizens and businesses have a choice of broadband options.

A: What's the plan to meet those goals?

The Orange County Broadband Authority's (OCBA) solution to our broadband challenge is multi-faceted. First, we'll leverage our existing fiber assets connecting schools and public safety facilities by upsizing the fiber counts. In the meantime, we'll build multi-tenant towers with the initial goal of supporting a first responders radio system. We'll then put these towers to dual use by allowing service providers to install broadband equipment, therefore utilizing the towers' additional fiber capacity to provide broadband. This step is significant because the construction cost of towers and fiber is very expensive and often impedes service providers from entering the market in some communities.

By significantly reducing capital expense barriers for private service providers, we can recruit new companies to our community to provide affordable, reliable broadband options.

We've already used our recent broadband survey results to develop 13 service areas that are unserved or underserved in Orange County. We're now in the process of prioritizing each service area, determining funding sources, and developing a master schedule.

A: What might challenge this plan?

Obtaining enough funding, recruiting new providers with reasonable rates, dealing with the tree cover and terrain, and obtaining the necessary construction workforce to complete each service area on time and under budget will all present challenges.

A: What would you like other counties to know about your program?

You need to engage citizens and businesses to assess the actual broadband needs in your community because the current broadband coverage maps are often inaccurate. I would also advise that folks complete the following steps when mapping out a plan:

- Determine existing broadband coverage.
- Determine current broadband capacity.
- Determine current and future broadband demands.
- Leverage capital projects (schools, public safety, etc.) that include broadband infrastructure (fiber and towers) to lower future broadband costs.
- Prioritize service areas based on survey results.
- Evaluate broadband connectivity options (fiber, wireless, hybrid, etc.) for each service area.
- Determine cost per service area.
- Determine projected days to complete each service area.
- Evaluate funding options for each service area (grants, loans, etc.)
- Develop Master Broadband Plan implementation schedule-based on priorities and funding.

We at VACo offer our thanks to Lewis and Orange County for taking the time to speak with us about their exciting plan to provide internet access in their community. It is our hope that by learning about this model, more localities will be inspired to find their own pathway forward.

VACo Contact: [Angela Inglett](#)

A look at... Dinwiddie County Sports Tourism



The Dinwiddie County Sports Complex opened its gates in June 2011 and over the past eight years, has put Dinwiddie County on the Sports Tourism map! The facility, houses a football stadium, full-sized baseball field, soccer stadium, and three NCAA and high school level softball fields. The facility has welcomed more than 300,000 people through hosting numerous collegiate programs including Virginia Commonwealth University Soccer, Richard Bland College, and multiple NCAA Division II baseball teams from up and down the east coast. The facility hosts a variety of youth state and regional tournaments and is the proud home of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association State Softball Championships. The Complex was named “Best Facility in 2012 by the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) and in 2013 earned the same distinction from the National Association of Counties (NACo).



The Sports Complex has allowed Dinwiddie County to shine on state and national stages. As people travel from far-and-wide to attend sporting events, they often visit local restaurants, businesses and local attractions during their stay. This award-winning facility has been a great boost not only to sports tourism but also to tourism overall in Dinwiddie County and the region!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcPx02li5vc> (Drone footage of the Dinwiddie County Sports Complex)

SPORTS TOURISM continued on Page 11

SPORTS TOURISM continued from Page 10



Virginia Motor Sports Parks is a mecca for sports tourism activity in the state and is located in Dinwiddie County. The venue hosts a variety of different events, which bring thousands of sports enthusiasts, thrill seekers and spectators to this fantastic raceway. The venue is also the host location for the Dinwiddie County Fair. This event brings thousands of fairgoers from around the region into Dinwiddie County for three days of thrilling carnival rides, live music, cool attractions and delicious food.

You can expect great facilities and a great experience when visiting Dinwiddie County, where sports tourism is thriving and growing. Come define your experience in Dinwiddie County!

<https://www.virginiamotorsports.com>

CONTACT: [Marie Grant](#) | Grants & Community Information Coordinator | Dinwiddie County | 804.469.4500 ext 3230

Counties Prepare for the 2020 Census: The Importance of Partnerships

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Editor's Note: As counties continue to prepare for a successful 2020 Census, VACo will be highlighting innovative approaches and ideas to promote Census participation. VACo members: have a great idea for Census outreach? Please share with [Katie Boyle](#) or [Joe Lerch](#) so that VACo can feature your program in an upcoming edition of County Connections!

With an estimated 65 percent of Arlington County's population living in areas designated as "hard to count," Arlington County staff and members of the local Complete Count Committee are enlisting a vast network of community organizations to help get the word out about the importance of the Census. Dr. Bryna Helfer, Assistant County Manager for Communication and Public Engagement, thinks of Census outreach as a grassroots campaign. "It will take the whole community" to ensure a successful Census, she told VACo, pointing out the importance of County residents hearing the same message from several trusted messengers. Dr. Helfer listed residents with limited English proficiency, young children, and renters as examples of community members the County hopes to work with community partners to reach.

After holding a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify potential partners who could help spread the word about the importance of participating in the Census, Arlington Complete Count Committee members and County staff began recruiting community partners, who commit to amplifying this message by sharing information with their networks. Approximately 120 organizations have signed up to be partners, with plans for many more to join the effort. Partner organizations include civic associations, apartment complexes, nonprofits, institutions of higher education, military installations, and congregations; the County plans to continue outreach with the business community, the faith community, PTAs, sports teams, and many other community groups.

Arlington County will offer training to partners and will supply a toolkit of messaging materials, to include materials translated into languages other than English. The County has been adjusting its approach as it works with partners, recognizing that some organizations need more resources from the County, and some organizations bring resources with them (such as a cadre of volunteers). Dr. Helfer is hopeful that the investment the County and its partners are making in building relationships will create a foundation of trust that will support joint efforts beyond the 2020 Census. In the near term, Arlington County has high hopes for the benefits of its collaboration with its community partners. Asked to offer advice to other counties that may be interested in adopting a similar approach, Dr. Helfer suggested that a locality identify all of its potential partners who may be able to assist in conveying the message. "A County-wide Census benefits all of us," she said.

Additional information about Arlington's Census Partner program is available at <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/census-2020/partnership>.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

JLARC Reviews State Oversight of Local and Regional Jails



The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) received a briefing from its staff on September 16 on the state's oversight of local and regional jails. JLARC staff took up this issue in the context of a broader review of the responsibilities of the Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG); that study directive asked staff to evaluate OSIG's role and authority in inspecting jails and investigating incidents within jails. JLARC staff recommended against transferring authority for jail inspections and death reviews to OSIG, but offered some suggestions on how the current oversight conducted by the Department of Corrections and the Board of Corrections could be improved. VACo had been interviewed by JLARC staff during the study process and advised against establishing parallel inspection processes.

JLARC's [report](#) notes the challenges inherent in operating local and regional jails, pointing out that the average length of stay of a jail inmate in Virginia is 17 days, while state prison inmates stay an average of six years. Individuals incarcerated in jails often have serious medical conditions, with an estimated 20 percent of jail inmates known or suspected to have a mental illness in June 2018. The report also notes that in 2018, one quarter of all inmates in local and regional jails were state-responsible inmates.

The Board of Corrections (BOC) establishes standards for construction and operation of jails, and the Department of Corrections (DOC) inspects jails for compliance with these standards on behalf of the Board (one of JLARC's recommendations is that the name of the Board of Corrections should be changed to avoid confusion with the Department, which operates state prisons in addition to inspecting jails). The BOC was tasked in 2017 with reviewing all deaths of inmates in local and regional jails and the legislature provided two staff positions to carry out this responsibility. JLARC recommended consolidating the DOC inspection staff with the BOC death review staff and placing both functions under the BOC; this proposed structure, in JLARC's view, would encourage the interpretation of standards in a consistent manner in both types of reviews and enable problems found during death reviews to be considered when standards are reviewed, rather than jail inspections and death reviews being conducted in isolation from each other.

Among JLARC's other recommendations were the following proposals:

- Require annual reporting to the BOC on the results of jail inspection reports so that trends could be identified and addressed through training or changes in standards.
- Require the BOC to produce an annual report on the results of death reviews.
- Enhance BOC staff training on medical issues that are relevant to deaths in jails.
- Fund a director of jail oversight, who would report to the BOC.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

VRS Realizes 6.7% Investment Return for FY 2019 – What Comes Next?



The Virginia Retirement System (VRS) recently [announced](#) that it had achieved a 6.7% return on its investment portfolio for FY 2019. The net position of the trust fund is now at a new high of \$82.3 billion. Even though all major asset classes within the VRS portfolio posted positive returns, VRS had anticipated a rate of return of 7% for FY 2019.

As previously [reported](#), though a difference of 0.3% may seem small, it may also necessitate a lowering of the assumed annual rate of return going forward and lead to higher employer contribution rates. This would have a direct impact on state and local government budgets. Though Virginia [code](#) mandates the determination of employer contribution rates in “a manner so as to remain relatively level,” at the July 15th meeting of JLARC, VRS staff estimated that lowering the assumed rate of return by 0.25% could have a potential fiscal impact of more than \$200 million.

In October, the VRS plan actuary will present the State and Teacher plan actuarial reports to the VRS Board and recommend to the VRS Board contribution rates to support the plans. In November, the VRS Board will receive a report from the plan actuary that will provide information on all political subdivision plans in aggregate. Each local government will receive its custom actuarial report after the first of the year, which will include its contribution rates for the next biennium.

Lowering the assumed rate of return to reflect the realities of a changing market would likely be beneficial to the long-term fiscal health of VRS, even if it is painful to the budgeting process. However, additional state cash infusions to VRS may help offset any lower rate of return and maintain the funded status of the pension plans that VRS administers, contributing to the long-term fiscal stability of the state and local government. This was done in recent years when the General Assembly made large one-time appropriations to pay down the 2010-2012 deferred contributions for State and Teacher plans.

VRS also released its [latest](#) monthly publication of Member News. This issue includes an overview of the Hybrid Retirement Plan Learning Channel, Auto-Escalation for Hybrid Plan members, as well as information detailing retirement planning tools and management options. To subscribe to this newsletter, please visit the following [site](#).

VRS serves more than 722,000 total members, retirees, and beneficiaries. The fiduciary net position of the trust fund is \$82.3 billion and as based on assets, is the 19th largest among public and private pension systems in the United States.

The VRS Board of Trustees will [meet](#) next on October 10 at 1:30 p.m. in Richmond. VACo staff will continue to report and engage on these issues.

VACo Contact: [Jeremy R. Bennett](#)

Legislators Receive Update on Restoration of General Fund Reductions to Community Services Boards



Acting Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) Mira Signer briefed members of the Joint Subcommittee on Health and Human Resources Oversight last week about the Department's actions to provide assistance to Community Services Boards (CSBs) with reductions in General Fund (GF) support incorporated in the 2018 Appropriations Act.

The biennium budget enacted in 2018 reduced state GF support to CSBs by \$11.1 million in FY 2019 and \$25 million in FY 2020, with the expectation that CSBs would replace these dollars with Medicaid reimbursements for services for CSB clients who were newly eligible for Medicaid under the expansion of eligibility that took effect January 1, 2019. VACo, VML, the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards, and several local governments raised concerns last fall about whether the CSBs would be made whole with Medicaid reimbursements, especially in FY 2019, as newly-eligible CSB clients needed to be enrolled in Medicaid, and CSBs needed to perfect billing processes with the managed care organizations that administer most of the Medicaid-funded services in Virginia. In order to respond to this concern, the Governor's introduced budget authorized DBHDS to make \$7 million in special funds available to CSBs if their Medicaid reimbursements did not reach at least 90 percent of the assumed GF reductions. VACo worked with VML, VACSB, and other stakeholders to include some additional reporting language in the budget, so that the GF reductions for FY 2020 could be revisited, if necessary, and to allow this assistance to be provided to CSBs earlier in FY 2019.

Acting Commissioner Signer reported to the Joint Subcommittee that DBHDS worked with the CSBs over the spring and summer to develop a methodology to measure Medicaid reimbursements relative to GF reductions, and determined that the aggregate shortfall was \$7.8 million for FY 2019, which would allow DBHDS to release the \$7 million in special funds. DBHDS and the CSBs agreed upon a methodology to distribute these dollars, which are expected to be provided to CSBs by the end of the month. CSBs will submit additional data this week, which will be included in DBHDS's next quarterly report to the legislature; Acting Commissioner Signer suggested that this data will provide a clearer picture of how Medicaid reimbursements are stacking up relative to the FY 2020 GF reductions. She cautioned the Joint Subcommittee that the \$7 million in GF restoration used one-time funding from departmental balances.

VACo's Finance Steering Committee discussed this issue at its August 15 meeting and provided preliminary approval to language in the draft legislative program in support of keeping CSBs whole in FY 2020. VACo will continue to monitor the reports on Medicaid reimbursements relative to GF reductions as the 2020 General Assembly approaches.

Acting Commissioner Signer's presentation is available at [this link](#).

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Seeks County Comments on Adult Protective Services Mandate



As directed by Executive Order 58 (2007), which outlines the process for periodic review of mandates on local governments, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) is seeking input from counties regarding the statutory mandate for local departments of social services to provide adult protective services, which is categorized as SHHR.DARS004 in the Catalog of State and Federal Mandates. The mandate assessment process is an in-depth review of the effect, including the fiscal impact, of a mandate on local governments. An abstract for mandate SHHR.DARS004 may be found via the Catalog of State and Federal Mandates at: <https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/MandatesSearch/MandatesSearch.aspx> (type "SHHR.DARS004" in the "Search For" box in the upper left corner).

The APS mandate review period opens October 1, 2019, and DARS has requested that comments be received by Friday, November 1 in order to allow DARS staff time to review the feedback and submit recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. To provide feedback about the mandate, counties may complete a Locality Fiscal Impact Comments Form, which may be found at: <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/agency-assessment-mandates-local-government>. The fiscal impact form may not be altered, and DARS will accept only one fiscal impact form per locality.

Completed fiscal impact forms may be submitted by email (Venus.bryant@dars.virginia.gov) or U.S. mail to the address below:

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
Adult Protective Services Division
8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Henrico VA 23229
Attn: Venus Bryant

Please direct any questions to Paige McCleary at Paige.mccleary@dars.virginia.gov.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)

2019 edition of the Catalog of State and Federal Mandates on Local Governments released



The 2019 edition of the Catalog of State and Federal Mandates on Local Governments has been approved and published by the Commission on Local Government. The Commission approved the 2019 version on September 12, 2019. The Code of Virginia, § 15.2-2903(7), directs the Commission to prepare and annually update a catalog of this nature. The online database catalog was produced with the input of various agencies that administer or have purview over the mandates.

The catalog is available at the following link: Mandates Online Database (<https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/Mandates.../MandatesSearch.aspx>). It has also been published to LIS (<https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2019/RD342>).

The staff of the Commission on Local Government welcomes and encourages your comments, suggestions, and questions. If you have any questions concerning this document, please contact David Conmy at 804.371.8010.



GASB has proposed new guidance on accounting and reporting, including:

An exposure draft addressing Sec. 457 deferred compensation plans in which GASB recommends that if a Sec. 457 deferred compensation plan meets GASB's definition of a pension plan, then the appropriate GASB pension standards be applied to the financial reporting for that plan.

GASB also issued Implementation Guide No. 2019-2, *Fiduciary Activities*, which provides guidance about how to apply the provisions of GASB Statement NO. 84, *Fiduciary Activities*.

VACo Contact: [Vicky Steinruck, CPA](#)

Regions 12 & 13 Meet in Washington County to Discuss Challenges and Opportunities in Southwest Virginia



Counties in Regions 12 & 13 gathered at the Washington County Government Center on September 12 for a robust discussion of issues of importance to local governments. Washington County Chairman Saul Hernandez and VACo President Tim Reeves welcomed attendees, who represented nearly all of the counties in Regions 12 & 13.

Tazewell County Administrator Eric Young made a presentation about the County’s approach to tourism as a component of economic development in a 21st century economy, in which industries are more mobile, and employers are interested in locating in communities with features that assist them in recruiting and retaining workers. Mr. Young encouraged attendees to think of tourism not solely as an end in itself, but as a way to support community amenities, such as restaurants and outdoor recreation opportunities, that help to make a locality a desirable place to live; these amenities can assist existing businesses with retaining their staff (particularly younger workers), and help to recruit new businesses. Tazewell County has worked to use the area’s geography to its advantage by promoting its outdoor recreation opportunities, such as ATV and hiking trails.

The afternoon concluded with a roundtable discussion of issues of importance to attendees, which ranged from concerns about costs associated with the Children’s Services Act to issues surrounding stormwater management. The need for counties to have additional options to raise revenue was a consistent theme in the conversation. The funding challenge posed by declining enrollment in local school divisions, which remain responsible for significant fixed costs, including capital needs, while losing the state revenue that is allocated on a per-pupil basis, was another topic of extensive discussion. Other issues under discussion included the stresses posed by jail costs; infrastructure needs, such as sewer projects; and the need to encourage alternatives to law enforcement as the providers of transportation for individuals who are subject to Emergency Custody or Temporary Detention Orders.

VACo extends its appreciation to all the members and sponsors who attended and is especially grateful to Washington County for hosting the event.

VACo Contact: [Katie Boyle](#)



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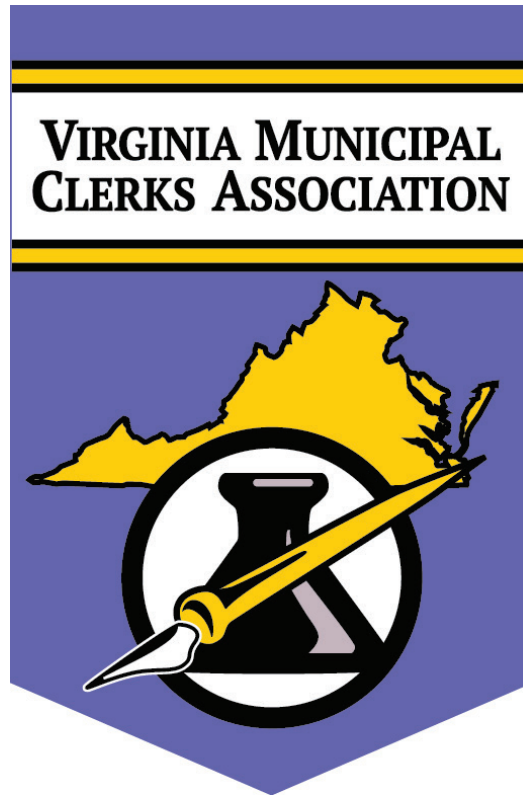
A graphic illustration on a teal background. It features a hand holding a money bag with a dollar sign, which is placed on top of a large upward-pointing arrow. The arrow is surrounded by smaller icons: a bar chart, a line graph with an upward arrow, a speech bubble, and several dollar signs. The scene is set on a perspective view of a road with white stripes leading towards the horizon.

**2019 Virginia
Local
Government
Investment Conference**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

**Richmond Marriott Short Pump
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Annual Institute and Academy

October 9 – 11, 2019

Virginia Beach

www.vmca.com

The Virginia Municipal Clerks Association will hold its Annual Institute and Academy October 9 – 11, 2019 in Virginia Beach. A Pre-Institute and Academy Workshop, (The Power of “Yes, And” – Improving Communication Through Improv Comedy, facilitated by David Webster) will be held October 8, 2019. In addition to the Pre-Institute and Academy, clerks may also participate in an Athenian Leadership Society Dialogue on Saturday, October 12, 2019 facilitated by Dr. Jane Long, IIMC Education Director and VMCA Clerk Libby Hume, MMC, from Cape Charles. For additional information regarding these events, please visit www.vmca.com.

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employment opportunities



The Virginia Association of Counties accepts employment ads in a PDF file or a link to a job site. Please include information for applying, and a link to other important information. Please do not fax your employment ad. VACo members are not charged for placing an employment ad. The cost is \$50 per ad for non-VACo members. VACo publishes the ad on its website and mobile app as well as the upcoming County Connections issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please email [Valerie Russell](mailto:Valerie.Russell@vacounty.org).



FINANCE DIRECTOR |

Warren County | Posted September 20



DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT | Town

of Rocky Mount | Posted September 20



DEVELOPMENT PLANNER

| Montgomery County | Posted September 19



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Posted September 19



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ANALYST | Hanover County | Posted September 19



FACILITIES MANAGER |

Roanoke County | Posted September 19



New Kent



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

OF FINANCIAL SERVICES | New Kent County | Posted September 18



DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

OF THE REVENUE IV | Fauquier County | Posted September 18



CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

COORDINATOR II | Stafford County | Posted September 18



WASTEWATER PLANT

MANAGER | Stafford County | Posted September 18



OFFICE ASSISTANT -

PARKS, RECREATION, & TOURISM | Gloucester County | Posted September 18



PUBLIC INFORMATION

& MARKETING COORDINATOR | Gloucester County | Posted September 18



COMMUNITY

ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC INFORMATION MANAGER |

Gloucester County | Posted September 18



New Kent



ENVIRONMENTAL

PLANNER | New Kent County | Posted September 17



COUNTY MANAGER

| Alleghany County, NC | Posted September 17



REAL ESTATE APPRAISER

III | Fairfax County | Posted September 16



DEPUTY CLERK TO THE

BOARD | Chesterfield County | Posted September 16



IFB/ROOF REPLACEMENT PROJECT | Warren County EDA | Posted September 16



SENIOR ELECTRICAL FACILITIES SPECIALIST | James City County | Posted September 13



ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR | James City County | Posted September 13



TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM PLANNER | Stafford County | Posted September 13



REVENUE MANAGER FOR COMPLIANCE | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



TAX REVENUE ACCOUNTANT | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION OFFICER | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



SENIOR SYSTEMS ANALYST | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



MANAGEMENT ANALYST II | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



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FACILITIES PROJECT MANAGER | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



CHIEF OF PARKS PLANNING | Albemarle County | Posted September 11



UTILITY SPECIALIST | New Kent County | Posted September 11



RECREATION PROGRAM SUPERVISOR-WELLNESS | Roanoke County | Posted September 11



PARKS & SPORTS FIELD TECHNICIAN II | Botetourt County | Posted September 10



PRETRIAL OFFICER | Gloucester County | Posted September 10



TOURISM DIVISION MANAGER | Gloucester County | Posted September 10



CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE PT | Gloucester County | Posted September 10



PRINCIPAL PLANT OPERATOR (NIGHT SHIFT) | Chesterfield County | Posted September 9



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER | NRV Regional Authority Montgomery County | Posted September 9



REGIONAL DAM SAFETY ENGINEER | Department of Conservation & Recreation | Posted September 9



HUMAN RESOURCE SPECIALIST I/II (BENEFITS SPECIALIST) | James City County | Posted September 6



SENIOR RISK & SAFETY ANALYST | City of Manassas | Posted September 6



RISK & SAFETY ANALYST | City of Manassas | Posted September 6

COUNTY CONNECTIONS

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VACo exists to support county officials and to effectively represent, promote and protect the interests of counties to better serve the people of Virginia.

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